

1,2,3 STORY TIME!

THE MAN WHO HIDES

Through the stories of the gospel, we get to know Jesus better. We are now in the last week of his life on earth. It is time to go to Jerusalem for the Passover feast and Jesus has to go through Jericho. Jericho! Do you remember? There he healed a blind man. In today's story, He invites himself to eat with a rich man. This man just wanted to see him but not to be seen, so he had a funny idea! I think we could give him the acrobat's medal. I won't tell you more. Listen carefully and, at the end of the story, you can answer the question of the day: Why does Jesus want to come to his house?

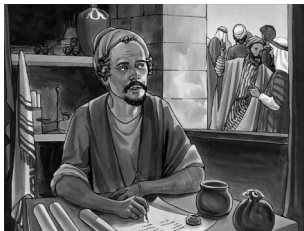
ZACHEUS, THE MAN WHO HIDES



In Jericho, the news runs:

- Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming! He is among the pilgrims who are going to Jerusalem!

Can you imagine! People leave their homes, their work and they go to meet him. Children come running from all sides and quickly the crowd gathers. Zacchaeus learns the news but does not join with others.



Zacchaeus! He is the chief of the tax collectors, everybody knows him in Jericho. He is the one who collects the tax money. He works for the Roman occupation and this displeases the people of Jericho greatly. Did he ask for more than what was due? Did he get rich with other people's money? In any case, people don't like him. Ah! He has a beautiful house and servants. He is very rich. He has everything to be happy; but, in reality, he isn't.

The coming of Jesus interests him. He would like to see Him. But why? Is it out of simple curiosity?

Did he understand that in the eyes of God he is lost, that he needs his forgiveness? We do not know, but in any case he is determined.

This is a unique opportunity, he says to himself, I cannot let it pass. I do not know this Jesus, but I have heard that he makes great miracles and change people's lives. I know where he will pass, but they will never let me approach and I won't be able to sneak in the first row. They will all stand in front of me. Even if I stand on my tiptoes, I will see nothing; I'm too small. They are all much taller than me. What can I do?



Suddenly an idea, a great idea, crosses his mind.

- I know! I will run and I will hide. No one will see me and I can see from above without being disturbed! I will be able to see Jesus, without him seeing me. Besides, He does not know me!

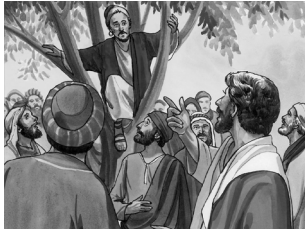


He runs far ahead of the crowd on the tree-lined road

- This tree is very bushy, let's go, let's climb up! He says to himself And hop! He climbs and settles on a big branch, behind these large leaves he is sheltered from all eyes. Like a bird on its perch,

Zacchaeus waits patiently there; well hidden! Rumors and footsteps on the road announce the arrival of the crowd. Zacchaeus widens his eyes.

- But where is he? How can he recognize Him among all these people?



Here they are, under his tree; he holds his breath. Suddenly Jesus stops and looks up. The crowd stops and looks up.

- Zacchaeus, hurry down, he says to him, because today I have to go to your place. I must stay in your house.

Zacchaeus can't believe his ears. Jesus saw him, called him by his name and invites himself to his home. Not a moment's hesitation!

He jumps down the tree and there he is, so happy, next to Jesus.

They head for his house. The crowd follows but there are murmurs of disapproval

- It's incredible! ... Now Jesus is going to stay with Zacchaeus, a man who sinned, who collaborates with the Romans! Many people even say he stole money! In Jericho there are enough other people that Jesus could eat with! What a shame!



They arrive at Zacchaeus' luxurious house and share the meal. We don't know what Jesus tells him but when they come out of the house people look at Zacchaeus and say to themselves:

- It looks as if he's not the same man anymore! What has happened?

- Listen Lord, said Zacchaeus, my life is totally changed. I'll give the poor half of my belongings and if I took too much money from someone, I will pay them back four times as much. You came to my

house but above all, you came into my life; I don't want to live as I did before but I want to be pleasing to God and to obey Him. The crowd is surprised but Jesus explains to them.

- You see, today salvation has entered this home, because it is men like him that I am coming to seek. I came to earth to find those who are far from God, who have disobeyed Him, to bring them back to Him. I came to seek and save what was lost to God.

1, 2 3, 4 AND YOU AND ME!

In this crowd that followed Jesus, many people still did not understand why Jesus cared for everyone, without making a difference. And you have you understood? Well, It's just because Jesus knows that everyone needs him.



And our question:

- Why does Jesus want to come to Zacchaeus'house?

- Because He wants to make him know the love of God and change his life. This is why He came to earth, to look for people like Zacchaeus, like me, like you, and let us know about God's love. He came to seek and save what was lost to God.

You will find the story of Zacchaeus in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 19.

4, 3, 2, 1 AND WE PARENTS!



We have in this account the experience of a conversion. Zacchaeus'heart was totally transformed by the presence of Jesus. He became a new creature, an other man, thanks to an inner miracle which produced a change of conduct towards God and towards men.

As parents, we have a responsibility to provide our children with a Christian education and to pray that they will experience the new birth, this interior work which God produces in the heart, and which is indispensable. Let's do it with perseverance.